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### Death-feigning in *Exochomus quadripustulatus* L. (Col.: Coccinellidae)

Recently after cutting a spray of firethorn in full fruit and taking it indoors, I noticed what at first glance looked like a small round fragment of debris fallen from it. Closer inspection, however, showed it to be a seemingly dead example of the above fairly common ladybird, lying on its back on the table. Thinking this strange, since it appeared quite uninjured, I placed it in the palm of my hand for examination with a lens. It continued in this deathlike state (as I suspected it to be) for about a minute and a half, after which it quickly "came to life" and, taken out into the sun, flew away.

I report this possibly trivial incident because, as far as I know, death-feigning (thanatosis, letisimulation) seems little known and seldom observed in Coccinellidae. At all events, I cannot remember having seen it before, though I have come across a good many ladybirds in my time; with warning coloration as most of them have, such a reflex would, I suppose, be superfluous. It may be limited to some of the darker or obscurely-coloured species, or occur in exceptional conditions only, such as falling from a height onto a hard surface. As expected, I was unable to induce it in the common *Adalia bipunctata* L. for more than a second or so. — A.A. ALLEN, 49 Montcalm Road, Charlton, London SE7 8QG.

### *Claviger testaceus* Preys. (Col.: Pselaphidae) in pitfall traps near Folkestone, Kent

As part of a terrestrial monitoring programme, contracted by Transmanche-Link, groups of pitfall traps were installed on that part of the Folkestone-Etchinghill escarpment SSSI between Sugarloaf Hill, in the east, and Peene Hill, to the west. At each of eight sites four glass jars, with a mouth diameter of 48 mm, were arranged at the corners of a one metre square at locations on the upper and lower sections of the chalk escarpment. These pitfall traps were placed in position on 23rd May and removed, four weeks later, on 20th June 1989.

One of these sampling sites is situated just west of Cheriton Water Works on the steep upper slope of the escarpment at Cherry Garden Hill (TR207380). Among the Coleoptera collected were six *Claviger testaceus* Preys. This distinctive myrmecophilous pselaphid is typically found in the nests of *Lasius flavus* (F.), which Donisthorpe (1927, *The Guests of British Ants*, pp.13-14) regarded as its primary host. However, he also lists *Lasius*

alienus (Foerst.) and *Myrmica scabrinodis* Nyl. as infrequent alternative hosts. All three of these ant species were caught at this site. Their respective mean numbers per trap were 8, 1 and 38.

During 1988 pitfall traps had been installed at the same locations between 25th May and 22nd June. Indeed, many of the 1989 traps were replaced in the holes left in the turf from the previous year. The same three species of ant were collected from this site in 1988, at mean numbers/trap of 3.5, 1.25 and 68.9 respectively, but no *Claviger testaceus* were caught.

I am unaware of any records of *C. testaceus* having previously been collected in pitfall traps. It is thought unlikely that these slow-moving pselaphids crawled from a *Lasius flavus* nest and fell into the pitfall traps. It would appear much more likely that they were being transported by their hosts from one nest to another. Certainly there were more than sufficient ants in each jar containing *C. testaceus* to satisfy this theory. The questions remain, why should this behaviour have occurred during 1989 but not at the same site in 1988?; and why has it not been observed at the numerous other chalk grassland sites where extensive pitfall programmes have been carried out? Was the hot dry summer of 1989 responsible for initiating some unusual behaviour on the part of the beetle and/or its ant host? Alternatively, had the *L. flavus* colonies increased, as a result of favourable climatic factors, necessitating emigration to found new colonies? — R. COLIN WELCH, Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, Monks Wood Experimental Station, Abbots Ripton, Huntingdon, Cambs PE17 2LS.

### ***Mordellistena nanuloides* Ermisch (Col.: Mordellidae) from the Isle of Grain, Kent**

On 16.viii.88, I tapped a female *M. nanuloides* from a plant of *Artemisia maritima* L. growing not far above high water mark at a site just to the south of the town of Grain, Isle of Grain. No further specimens could be found in spite of careful examination of stands of the plant growing in the area. On 21.vi.89, I was taken by my friend Mr N. Heal to the sea-wall at Hoo Marsh, Isle of Grain and there we found a number of specimens of *nanuloides* by tapping plants of the same species over our nets. They were accompanied by many examples of *Longitarsis absynthii* Kutschera, a species which Mr Heal had noted at the spot on a visit a few days previously.

This species was formerly confused with *M. parvula* (Gyllenhal) (see Allen, A.A. 1986 *Ent. Record* 98: 47; Batten, R. 1986 *Ent. Gazette* 37: 225). As far as I am aware, it has published records only from the Isle of Sheppey, Kent. The site at Grain is only two km (across the Medway estuary) from the nearest part of the Isle of Sheppey but whether the species has reached the Isle of Grain from the Isle of Sheppey recently or has long been present there is something that is unlikely to be clarified. — J.A. OWEN, 8 Kingsdown Road, Epsom, Surrey KT17 3PU.